

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 EB-08

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FM AMCONSUL QUEBEC

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 891

INFO AMCONSUL MONTREAL PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY OTTAWA PRIORITY

AMCONSUL TORONTO POUCH

C O N F I D E N T I A L QUEBEC 0059

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, CA

SUBJECT: LEON DION'S VIEWS ON GATHERING STORM IN QUEBEC

1. WELL KNOWN LAVAL UNIVERSITY PROFESSOR, LEON DION, CONFIDED TO ME RECENTLY THAT HE IS SEEKING WAYS OF PROVIDING INCONSPICUOUS BRIDGE BETWEEN OTTAWA AND QUEBEC. HE CLAIMS TO HAVE AROUSED CONSIDERABLE INTEREST WITH ARTICLES HE HAS PUBLISHED RECENTLY IN LE DEVOIR SUGGESTING COMPROMISE SOLUTION AS ONLY WAY OUT OF PRESENT CRISIS BROUGHT ON BY ELECTION OF INDEPENDENTIST GOVERNMENT IN QUEBEC. WITH INGENUITY, HE ASSERTS, A SOLUTION MIGHT BE FOUND WHICH FEDERALIST COULD CALL CONFEDERATION AND SOVERIGNTISTS COULD CALL INDEPENDENCE.

2. FOLLOWING HIS ARTICLES IN LE DVOIR, DION HAS VISITED OTTAWA AND TORONTO. IN FORMER HE CALIMS TO HAVE FOUND SERIOUS INTEREST IN "HIGH GOVERNMENT CIRCLES" IN FINDING BASIS FOR COMPROMISE SPAD, WORK, HOWEVER, MUST BE CIRCUMSPECT FOR NEITHER TRUDEAU NOR LEVESQUE CAN "AFFORD LOSE FACE."

3. IN TORONTO DION HAS FOUND LEADERS IN BUSINESS COMMUNITY PARTICULARLY APPREHENSIVE OF PROPECT OF QUEBEC SEPARATION, CONFIDENTIAL

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HISTORIC ECONOMIC INTERDEPENDENCE OF TWO PROVINCES IS VITAL TO ONTARIO WHICH SELLS SOME 40 PERCENT OF ITS "PRODUCTION" IN QUEBEC DION POINTED OUT. IMPORTANT ELEMENTS IN BUSINESS COMMUNITY VIEW TRUDEAU WITH HIS INFLEXIBLE ATTITUDE TOWARDS SIGNIFICANT CONCESSIONS TO QUEBEC AS BARRIER TO REASSEMBALBE FEDERALIST SETTLEMENT. ACCORDING TO DION, POTENT ONTARIAN LIBERAL FORCES ARE WORKING TO UNSEAT TURDEAN AS PRIME MINISTER

AND REPLACE HIM WITH FORMER MIN FIN JOHN TURNER.

4. DION CLAIMED THAT THOSE WHO KNOW TRUDEAU WELL ARE CONVINCED THAT HE IS NOT SINCERE IN HIS VAGUELY WORDED EXPRESSIONS OF WILLINGNESS TO NEGOTIATE WIDE CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGE WITHIN FEDERAL STRUCTURE. DION HIMSELF DOUBTS TRUDEAU, WHOM HE KNOWS FROM STUDENT DAYS, HAS EITHER PERSONAL OR POLITICAL FLEXIBILITY NEEDED TO REACH COMPROMISE ON STRUCTURAL CHANGES WHICH HE SEES AS REQUIRED TO SATISFY QUEBEC ASPIRATIONS, WHEN ASKED FOR HIS INTERPRETATION OF TRUDEAU'S RECENT REMARKS EXPRESSING WILLINGNESS TO CONSIDER ANY CHANGE IN CONSTITUTION EXCEPT GUARANTEES OF PERSONAL AND COLLECTIVE BASIC RIGHTS, DION SAID PRIME MINISTER'S PURPOSE IN ATTEMPTING TO APPEAR FLEXIBLE IS BASED ON HIS NEED TO WIN FORTHCOMING BY-ELECTIONS IN QUEBEC. IF LIBERALS DO NOT WIN 4 OUT OF 5 SEATS IN ELECTION, TRUDEAU WILL NOT SURVIVE POLITICALLY, DION CONTENDED.

5. PROVINCIAL LIBERAL PARTY HAS BEEN REDUCED TO DISORGANIZED GROUPS OF SQUABBLING SURVIVORS STILL IN SHOCK FROM STUNNING ELECTORIAL DEFEAT. HOWEVER, DION IS HOPEFUL QUEBEC FEDERALISTS WILL SOON BEGIN TO COALESCE AROUND HEALTHY CORE WHICH OPPOSES SEPARATISM WHILE REJECTING TRUDEAU'S "CENTRALISM". PROMINENT MEMBERS OF THIS GROUP INCLUDE: CLAUDE CASTONGUAY; FORMER MINISTER CULTURAL AFFAIRS, JEAN-PAUL L'ALLIER; AND CLAUDE RYAN OF L'ÉVÉNEMENT. STRENGTH OF THIS GROUP IN TERMS OF POPULAR ACCEPTABILITY IS THAT THEY ARE WIDELY VIEWED AS GENUINE QUEBECOIS NATIONALISTS DESPITE THEIR ATTACHMENT TO CONTINUING FEDERAL LINKS. DION BELIEVES THEY COULD DEVELOP

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INTO RALLYING POINT AS CONFUSED, UNCOMMITTED BLOC OF QUEBECOIS BECAME DISENCHANTED BY STRUGGLE BETWEEN SEPARATISTS AND RIGID FEDERALISTS. PQ, DION BELIEVES, WILL INEVITABLY BEGIN TO LOSE COHESION AND IMPETUS AS EUPHORIA OF ELECTION VICTORY DISSIPATES. IDEOLOGICAL DIFFERENCES AND ECONOMIC REALITIES WILL TEND TO ENCOURAGE DIVISION. AT THAT POINT, MODERATE FEDERALIST MAY BECOME INCREASINGLY ATTRACTIVE. IT IS EVEN POSSIBLE THAT MODERATE ELEMENTS IN PQ LEADERSHIP COULD JOIN WITH THIS GROUP TO FORM FUTURE QUEBEC GOVERNMENT SHOULD PQ BREAK UP AS RESULT OF REFERENDUM LOSS OR SOME INTERNAL DISPUTE.

6. AS FOR PARTI QUEBECOIS IS STABILITY, DION ASSERTED THAT RENE LEVESQUE IS ONLY PERSON WHO COULD HOLD TOGETHER SUCH A DISPARATE, IDEOLOGICALLY ILL-MATCHED GROUP. ON ONE HAND, ARE MODERATES SUCH AS JOCQUE PARIZEAU, CLAUDE MORIN, JACQUE-YVAN MORIN AND A MAJORITY OF THEIR CABINET COLLEAGUES ON THE OTHER, ARE MIXED BAG OF IDEALISTS WITH LITTLE CONCEPTION OF HOW TO GOVERN. SOMEWHAT ISOLATED IN GOQ BUT STRONG IN PARTY, ARE FEW RADICALS SUCH AS ROBERTS BURNS.

DION BELIEVES PARTY AND GOVERNMENT WOULD DISINTEGRATE WITHOUT  
LEVESQUE. HE SEES NO ONE ELSE CAPABLE OF KEEPING NATURALLY  
ANTAGONISTIC ELEMENTS WORKING TOGETHER.  
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